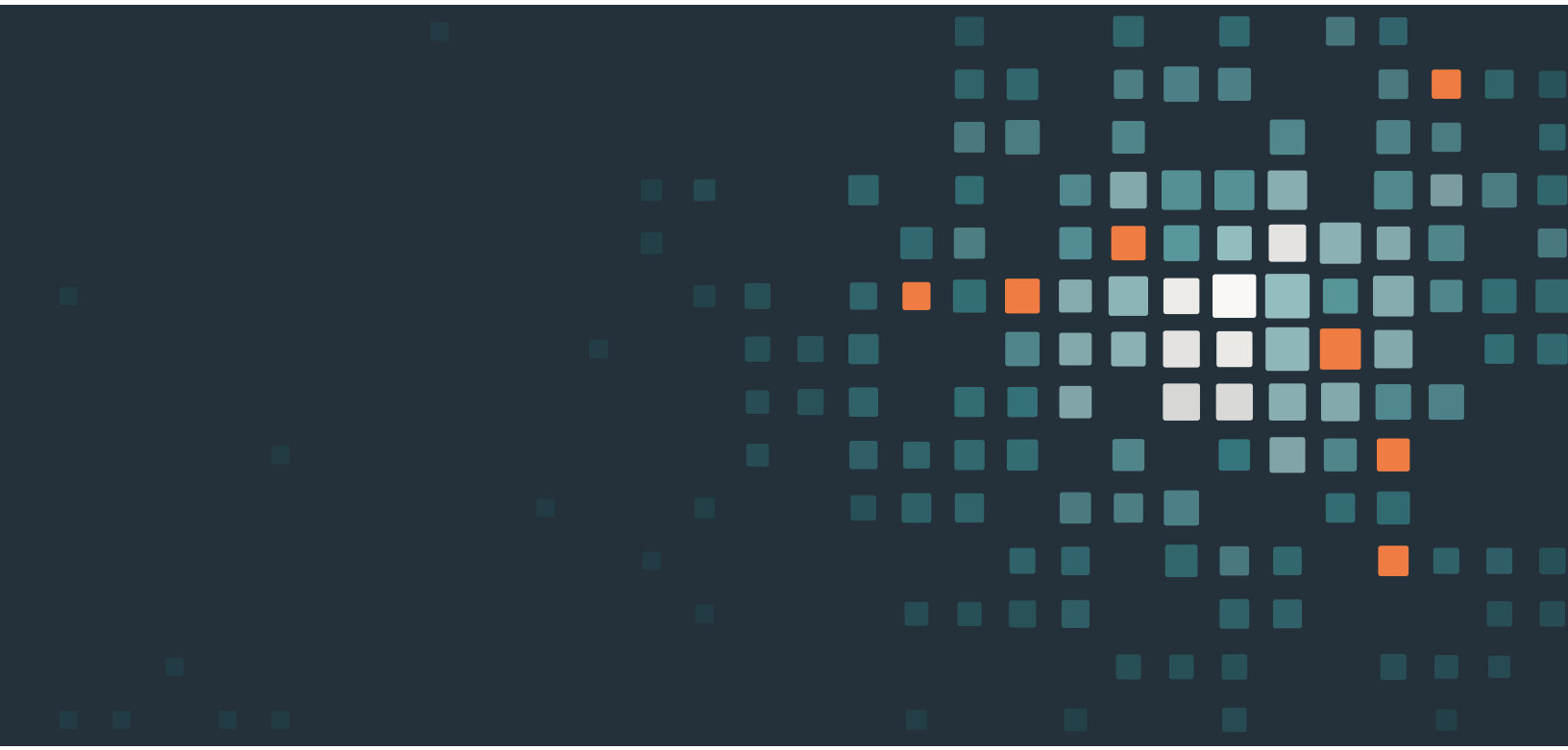
Samet Kasik

STRATEGY

# What Should a Business Be Able to Do After a Consulting Project?

A recommendation can be enough for one decision. When the team will make the same decision again, the project needs to leave the reasoning behind, not just the workbook.

*by Samet Kasik*



KEY POINTS

- The purpose of a consulting project determines what it should leave behind. A recommendation can be enough for a one-time decision. A decision the team will make again needs a way to revisit the reasoning.
- If the team is meant to take over, use a real decision to check the handover. An editable file is of limited use if no one knows when to question what it says.
- Agree on who will make the decision, who will put it into practice, and what support is included. Each responsibility affects what the project can reasonably promise.

Imagine a service business that brings in a consultant to review its pricing. The work ends with a recommendation, a workbook and a meeting to explain both. Three months later, labour costs rise. The owner opens the workbook and looks for the cell to update.

The change is easy to make. The harder question is what to do with the new number. Should the business raise every price? Can it leave its standard service alone and charge separately for the work that tends to run over? The workbook shows what happens to the margin. The owner still needs to know which trade-off the original recommendation was meant to address.

Whether that is a problem depends on what the business hired the consultant to do.

## Was the project for this decision or the next one too?

Perhaps the owner wanted an independent view before changing the price of one service. The consultant found that most jobs were profitable at the current price. A smaller group took longer because customers routinely asked for work that was never included in the quote. The recommendation was to clarify what the standard price covered and quote the extra work separately.

A short report could be enough. It would show why an increase across the board was less attractive, explain how the conclusion was reached, and make clear which findings could change it. The owner could then make a decision, including deciding to leave prices alone. The project need not turn into a review of every service or a training program for the team.

In *Rainmaker*, Neil Plumridge and Robert Nason distinguish the work a consultant delivers from the effect it has on the client.[1] Applied here, the distinction helps explain why a modest report can be a good result: it enables a decision the owner was struggling to make. There is no need to promise a broader transformation to justify the work.

Now suppose the owner wants a manager to review prices every quarter. The recommendation still matters, but it is only the first use of the work. The manager needs to understand why an across-the-board increase was rejected, which costs should be updated, and when a change in customer behaviour

calls for a fresh look at the offer. A workbook can carry the calculation. The reasoning has to travel with it.

## Can someone on the team use it when the numbers change?

If the scope includes handing over the pricing review, I would ask the manager to bring a recent quote to the final meeting. Let them update the costs and explain what, if anything, they would change. Their explanation will tell us more about the handover than watching the consultant demonstrate the workbook.

Suppose the updated workbook shows margins falling on recent jobs quoted at the standard rate. Before raising that rate, the manager can check whether those jobs really were standard. If the drop is concentrated in jobs that included unquoted extras, higher labour costs have made a scope problem more expensive. If margins have fallen on ordinary jobs too, the standard rate deserves another look.

This is also where a handover can be made unnecessarily complicated. If the manager needs a handful of reliable inputs and a clear reason to review them, a workbook with a few notes may be enough. There is little value in leaving behind a sophisticated model the business cannot keep current. I would rather hand over an estimate the team understands than a more precise-looking figure nobody can explain.

B. Joseph Pine II treats follow-through as part of helping a change take hold in *The Transformation Economy*.[2] For a pricing project, that might mean working through one review together while the team can still ask questions, then letting the manager run the next one. The point is to see whether the method fits the way the business works, including where the numbers come from and who has time to maintain them.

## Where should the work end?

The scope is easier to agree on when both sides can finish this sentence: *When this work is done, we'll be able to…*

For the service business, the answer could be *decide whether to change the price and scope of our standard service*. If it is *review prices each quarter without commissioning another study*, the project needs a method the manager can use and a chance to try it. If the goal is to put the new pricing into use, someone also has to update quote templates, brief staff and check how customers respond. Those responsibilities take time. They should be visible in the scope and the fee, whether the consultant or the client takes them on.

Responsibility for the work also differs from responsibility for the outcome. A consultant can explain what a price change is expected to do, help implement it and agree on how to review it. What it does to profit still depends on which customers accept it, the work they buy and what that work costs to deliver. Both sides should know how they will interpret those results before treating them as a measure of the project.

There may still be good reason to call the consultant again. A new service, a different customer group or a decision with unusually large consequences may warrant another outside view. I would be glad to come back for that conversation. The next routine price review should already belong to the manager.

## REFERENCES


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**Samet Kasik** is Co-Founder and Business & Digital Strategy Lead at Acumen Business Consulting Inc. in London, Ontario. More essays, and a short note by email when new ones are published, at **sametkasik.ca**.



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